

My Secrets of Love

by
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"Three Weeks"
"His Hour"
"Where Love Leads"
Etc.

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"Whether we were suffragists or anti-suffragists before the war, we must all have come to the conclusion that now women deserve the vote."

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LET me digress today from the perennial theme of love and the secrets of the heart to say that everybody ought to be rejoiced at Lady Astor winning a seat in the British Parliament.

In the first place, whether we were suffragists or anti-suffragists before the war, we must all have come to the conclusion that women now deserve the vote. How Lady Astor fulfills the wishes of those who elected her is "up to her," but that she is elected should be, it seems to me, a matter for rejoicing to all women. I believe there are numbers of people in England who have never come into personal touch with Lady Astor who may in their hearts feel some resentment that she should be by birth an American and married to a man who was originally an American also.

That is how the absurd labelling system that I am always fighting manifests itself. She is "labelled" in this section of the public's mind as "American," and so all their prejudices are allowed full play, and the excellent suitability of the woman's mental equipment itself escapes their observation. What does it matter whether she was born American or not? She must be loyally English now, or she would not desire to take up a position which entails the hardest work. She is very rich, and she is a person, therefore she can have none of the usual clinging desires to influence her actions.

How stupid to resent her being the one chosen to inaugurate the new era in which women are to be participants in the nation's government! Supposing we had had some earnest, fiery English spinster or aggressive suffragette to create the precedent! We might have had the emancipation of women retarded by years, for men are still strong enough when their bristles are up—to present a formidable barrier! But with Lady Astor we can now feel safe, because her personal popularity and aplomb will cause the men's wave of antagonism to subside, and so the road for those who come after her will be made smooth.

It is perhaps natural that we might have wished the pioneer had been British, but at least, since fate did not arrange that, do not let us grumble about it.

The aim of the very people who feel resentment at Lady Astor's American birth is, presumably, the uplifting of the cause of women for the good of their country, but they have allowed that irrelevant factor of her being born an American to obscure their vision so that this outside thing is permitted to appear more important than the actual aim.

This is what I call "side tracking"—getting off the main line leading to your destination, because of prejudice. And it is this peculiar perversity which upsets the happiness of many lives! Here is a sentence I wrote a long time ago, and it illustrates what I am talking about:

"The thing which more than half of humanity seems to forget is the end they have in view. They desire something really ardently, and yet appear incapable of keeping their minds from straying into side issues, which must logically militate against, and probably prevent, their desire's accomplishment!"

"Side tracking" is nearly always caused by wounded vanity if we analyze it down to bed rock. Wounded vanity is the cause of jealousy, and jealousy is—the devil!

A friend writes that she looked the dearest, neatest little lady among all the men, in a plain coat and skirt, and that there was not a touch of the millionairess, not even a string of her wonderful pearls—and that a wave of admiration and welcome swept through the whole house.

And now we have only to wish that she will do splendidly, and that that marvellous instinct in women which makes them without fear when their feelings are touched will come forth in her strongly and make her battle at injustice, regardless of tiresome red tape, and that in years to come we shall look back and say, "She, with a fine rapier, slew the dragon whose stifling breath has killed so many noble ideas." So here's luck to her!

Howard Chandler Christy 1920